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### **Low control for high cholesterol**

The largest ever study – representing 147 million people – shows that most people with high cholesterol levels are not getting the treatment they need to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease such as heart attack and stroke.

Many of these people – living in England, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Scotland, Thailand and the United States of America – are unaware that they need treatment, which is easily accessible in the form of low-cost medicines.

This study, published today in the international public health journal, the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, is the first to show the extent of the treatment gap for high cholesterol – a common risk factor for early cardiovascular deaths. In Thailand, for example, 78% of adults surveyed had not been diagnosed, while in Japan, 53% of adults were diagnosed but remained untreated.

“Cholesterol-lowering medication is widely available, highly effective and can play an essential role in reducing cardiovascular disease around the world,” says study co-author, Dr Gregory A Roth, from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in the United States of America. “Despite these facts, effective medication coverage for control of high cholesterol remains disappointingly low.”

Cardiovascular diseases are the world’s biggest killers, claiming more than 17 million lives each year worldwide.

“Simple lifestyle changes such as avoiding tobacco use, regular physical activity and healthy diets can help prevent heart disease and stroke,” says Dr Shanthi Mendis, coordinator of WHO’s Chronic Diseases Prevention and Management unit. “Medication to lower blood cholesterol and blood pressure may be necessary if the risk is very high.”

Read the paper here: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/2/10-079947.pdf>

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The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* is one of the world's leading public health journals. It is the flagship periodical of WHO, with a special focus on developing countries. Articles are peer-reviewed and are independent of WHO guidelines. Abstracts are now available in the six official languages of the United Nations.

Further items in this month's issue include:

- What is the ideal weight gain during pregnancy? A study from Viet Nam
- Modern contraceptive use in Africa stagnates
- Radio programme helps combat food insecurity
- Why so slow to develop new antibiotics?
- Diabetes – a product of modern technology

The February issue table of contents can be found at: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/2/en/index.html>

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